

Review of the State of General Education at Philadelphia University

February 7 and 8, 2012

From the extensive collection of documents provided to the Office of the Provost by the University's three colleges, its academic support offices, Student Life, and the Library, and from meetings and interviews with faculty, staff, and/or students representing these units on February 7 and 8, a snapshot of the state of General Education at Philadelphia University emerges. This report will address three broad areas:

- I. Strengths and opportunities in the current situation of General Education
- II. Challenges to be addressed
- III. Recommendations for future curricular development

I. Strengths and opportunities in the current situation of General Education at Philadelphia University

The three principal strengths of the current General Education efforts at Philadelphia University are an excellent theoretical grasp of the role of General Education in a professional institution, numerous opportunities for collaboration and integration both within the College Studies Program and between College Studies and the professional majors, and a variety of administrative and physical supports designed to foster curricular and pedagogical cooperation and innovation.

A. Theoretical grasp of the role of General Education

1. At the institutional level: A invaluable asset and an important philosophical basis for the future consideration of General Education at Philadelphia University is Dr. Marion Roydhouse's 2009 report, "General Education Reform: The Background and Development of Liberal Education and Liberal/Professional Education at Philadelphia University." This report is remarkable for its grasp of both local and national issues in General Education and its sensitivity to the claims of both professional and liberal education. The document provides an important historical narrative of the development of General Education at the university, places Philadelphia University in the context of national curricular trends, and articulates a clear

rationale and vision for General Education at the institution. On a very practical level it provides a common language for the discussion of future developments in the curriculum.

2. At the College level: At the level of the college, this theoretical grasp of the role of General Education is articulated in such documents as the “C-DEC Curriculum Narrative” prepared by Dr. Ronald Kander, Executive Dean of the College of Design, Engineering and Commerce. In this report Dr. Kander proposes a vivid image that seeks to express the integration of College Studies and the professional majors through the newly-developed C-DEC core:

These elements all come together to form the C-DEC curriculum’s “DNA”. Picture a spiraling DNA double helix. One leg of the DNA spiral is the College Studies Curriculum spiraling through a student’s four-year curriculum. Simultaneously, a student will take depth courses in their major (the other leg of the DNA spiral). Linking these two “strands” together are the four C-DEC core courses, which supply periodic links between these two spiraling strands (like the base pairs linking the two legs of a DNA strand). These elements all spiral forward, together, through a four-year curriculum that culminates in the C-Dec Capstone Project.

Such a statement underscores the value and mutual dependence of professional and liberal education, and provides students with a clarifying image and rationale for pursuing the university’s General Education curriculum.

3. An integrative theory of General Education: A third important aspect of the University’s theory of General Education is that it is larger than the College Studies core curriculum and is considered the mutual responsibility of both College Studies and the majors. As the 2010-1011 Catalog specifically states:

General Education at the University is broader than just College Studies. General Education objectives are built into the course of study in each major. College Studies and our wider General Education focus allow our students to become lifelong learners, able to adapt to changing career demands.

Moreover, it is clear that the academic support offices and Student Life envision their work as consciously contributing to General Education at Philadelphia University. This more copious definition of General Education, subsuming both the liberal arts core curriculum and the work of the professional programs, greatly expands the concept and encourages, or rather demands, a high level of collaboration and integration.

B. Numerous opportunities for collaboration and integration

As the University's expansion of the definition of General Education to include more than the Liberal Arts core (College Studies) encourages and requires a high level of collaboration and integration, so also does the current General Education curriculum offer and provide opportunities for this integration.

1. Integration within College Studies: The College Studies program offers distinct areas where integrative thinking is the predominant mode of learning: Area Studies, Arts & Cultures, Junior Seminars, and the Senior Capstone Course. These courses, placed strategically throughout the four years of baccalaureate study, underscore the high value that the University places on integrative thought.
2. Integration between College Studies and the Majors: As indicated in the numerous materials submitted to the Provost's Office for this review, all three colleges can adduce instances of contributing to the goals of General Education across a range of majors and courses. In some instances courses in the major have been designed to meet specific College Studies programmatic goals, and have been cross-listed as fulfilling both College Studies and the discipline-specific major.
3. Integration between General Education and the academic support units: In both the evidence submitted to the Vice Provost and in the review meetings on February 8, the academic support units (Teaching Innovation & Nexus Learning, Learning & Advising, the Writing Program, and the Gutman Library) evinced a clear understanding of and enthusiastic commitment to the goals of General Education at Philadelphia University. In particular, the Center for Teaching Innovation and Nexus Learning, under the leadership of Dr. Roydhouse, is especially well-positioned to support the University's General Education goals, and the Writing Program was acknowledged by many faculty across the university as taking a dynamic leadership role in the integration of liberal and professional studies. In terms of explaining and conveying a sense of the importance of General Education to students, the Learning & Advising program is widely recognized as having a key role to play.
4. Integration between General Education and Student Life: The Student Life leadership and staff have a clear understanding of their role in the General Education of students and can readily relate what they do (career and internship planning, opportunities for civic engagement, and

service learning) to the University's General Education goals and Institutional Learning Outcomes. In its educational efforts, Residence Life focuses on formal methods of improving communication and problem solving skills, and on developing a greater awareness of diversity issues and opportunities.

C. Administrative and physical support for curricular and pedagogical cooperation and innovation in General Education

1. Administrative Support: As evidence of its strong commitment to General Education, the University has implemented a number of administrative and organizational changes designed to foster pedagogical cooperation and integration between professional and liberal education. These include:
 - a. Structural reorganization of the University into the College of Architecture and Built Environment, the College of Design, Engineering and Commerce, and the College of Science, Health and Liberal Arts.
 - b. The appointment of a Vice Provost charged with supporting faculty working on curricular change.
 - c. The appointment of an Academic Associate Dean of College Studies with special responsibility for this program.
 - d. The creation of an Office of Teaching Innovation and Nexus Learning.
 - e. The creation of a College Studies Committee charged with faculty and administrative oversight for the program.
 - f. The development of an Academic Opportunity and Oversight Committee to serve as a university-wide forum for communication about interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary academic issues.
2. Physical Support: Given the University's mission-based focus on architecture and the environment, it is not surprising that its efforts at curricular integration and General Education would manifest themselves in the construction of a new building on campus for the College of Design, Engineering and Commerce embodying, according to the 2011 Periodic Review Report, ". . . the university's commitment to innovation, interdisciplinary collaboration, and integrative learning." In terms of the iconography of the University's mission delivery, the location of such a building at the center of the campus could hardly be more significant.

Summary of Strengths

This combination of strengths – a solid theoretical grasp of the role of General Education at a professional university, numerous and clearly identified opportunities for educational collaboration and integration, and strong institutional support for general education – would be the envy of many liberal arts colleges and universities, and clearly places Philadelphia University in a solid position to take its educational programs up to the next level. In particular, the conceptualization of General Education as an institutional responsibility extending far beyond the Liberal Arts core curriculum to encompass the majors, the academic support offices, and Student Life, is a breakthrough and signature idea that gives Philadelphia University a much greater array of personnel, resources, and ideas to draw on in the delivery of General Education.

II. Challenges to be Addressed

With the manifest strengths of the General Education efforts at Philadelphia University come a variety of challenges to be addressed, many of which are common to American institutions of higher learning, but some of which are specific to or intensified by the particular conditions at Philadelphia. These challenges include: an inconsistent understanding of, commitment to, or application of the above strengths; a perceived lack of institution-wide dialog; a structural “silo” effect; and a variety of concerns about quality.

A. Inconsistent understanding of, commitment to, or application of the identified strengths

1. Theoretical grasp of the role of General Education: Despite the consistency of message about General Education in the various documents in circulation on campus (the Catalog, the 2011 Periodic Review Report, the College Studies at Philadelphia University report, the General Education Program Review overview, etc.) conversations with faculty, staff, and students revealed marked differences in the understanding of the role of and responsibility for General Education. In particular, the institution’s larger definition of General Education as subsuming the work of both College Studies and the majors is not widely understood or internalized. When asked about this, many faculty insisted that General Education at Philadelphia meant College Studies, and nothing more or less. The degree of understanding differed by both category (with administrators and staff generally having the best understanding of this concept, faculty less so, and students, predictably, with the least grasp of the idea) and, to some extent, by College (with C-SHLA understandably having the best grasp, C-ABE slightly less, and C-DEC the least overall understanding). At one college meeting a faculty member could insist that there was no on-campus rationale for General Education, which was troubling on two scores: 1. it indicates a glitch in the process of getting the highly articulated philosophy statements out to faculty; and 2. no one in this particular meeting contradicted this statement. In some instances, as evidenced in the February 8 College meetings, there is an outright hostility toward General Education, which is perceived by some as a waste of time and as taking critical credit hours away from professional study. (In another context, a staff member perceptively remarked that many faculty have not had positive personal experiences of general education in their own undergraduate

education, and so could hardly be expected to support or value it highly.) Given the thoughtful and nuanced philosophy of General Education that has evolved at Philadelphia in recent years, this situation indicates a challenge in promulgating these ideas among the various constituencies on campus.

2. Opportunities for Collaboration and Integration: While these opportunities clearly exist (as evidenced by the materials submitted to the Vice Provost in preparation for this review) there is a sense that these are generally recognized only when formally required, and do not rise to the level of a priority on a day-to-day basis. Again, this problem differs by group, with the College Studies faculty and the Writing Program personnel generally having a high-concept grasp of the possibilities for integration, and the professional colleges being able to adduce it when required to do so for the sake of the General Education report. When asked about opportunities for integration between professional and liberal education in the February 8 College meetings, the default faculty response was to identify writing as a good instance of integration, but this is a somewhat obvious answer, and does not address more complex questions of content integration. There is also some question about the extent to which students are being made aware of the importance of integration as part of the metacognitive process. An excellent positive example of students being made aware of the integration of professional and liberal studies as part of their overall General Education is the syllabus for the new C-DEC core course, DEC 101 Integrative Design Process, which takes the time to explain to students the role of the course in their major, in the DEC Core, in College Studies, and in their General Education. This effort is to be commended and could perhaps serve as a model for other courses.

3. Administrative Support for General Education: The challenges here are largely related to the rate of change at the University, which has resulted in some confusion about lines of responsibility and authority and the function of particular committees and staff members. On the question of responsibility for College Studies, for example, there was some question about who would have ultimate authority for the make-up and content of the program – C-SHLA? AOOC? While this matter is no doubt very clearly understood at some levels of the University, at others it is not, but this is something that can be easily clarified. A more troubling concern under this category was the feeling (expressed by a faculty member and generally assented to by colleagues) that faculty are not encouraged to collaborate with colleagues from other areas by the administration, and that when such collaboration occurs it is usually at the initiative of the

individual faculty members involved. Given the high value that the University places on collaboration and integration, it would be worthwhile to develop a formal strategy for encouraging faculty in such initiatives.

B. A Perceived lack of institution-wide dialog

The perception of a lack of ongoing dialog about General Education emerged as a major concern in the February 7 and 8 meetings, and took a variety of forms: Administration-Faculty, Faculty-Faculty, Administration-Faculty-Student. Sometimes this concern was about a lack of opportunities for discussion between constituencies, and at other times it was a question of who spoke for what initiatives and programs.

1. A perception that some decisions are top-down: Examples of this were historical (the promulgation of the College Studies learning objectives) and also more immediate (the premise that the current General Education review will not result in a reduction of the number of hours in College Studies).
2. A lack of dialog about what is happening in College Studies and what the majors need: While such a dialog is obviously the basis of integration efforts between College Studies and the professional majors, there was a perception that such dialog was not happening. When pressed on this point, faculty adduced a variety of reasons: lack of formal time and setting for such a dialog; the high number of adjuncts in College Studies; and the general complexity of the task – there are few common learning experiences in College Studies for professional faculty to point to, and the College Studies faculty are dealing with students from a vast array of majors, thus making specific applications to professional learning difficult.
3. No sense of General Education as a shared responsibility: As noted above, the administration's efforts to expand the definition of General Education beyond the Liberal Arts core (College Studies) to include work done in the professional majors and elsewhere have not by and large entered the popular imagination at Philadelphia University, and to be successful will require a lot more work and conscious dialog among constituencies.
4. Whom to dialog with: In the course of the February 7 and 8 meetings a felt need for a spokesperson for General Education emerged, someone who would speak for its importance and rationale, who could answer questions about it and be its advocate with faculty, students, staff

and administration. Currently this responsibility is dispersed among a variety of individuals and groups, but a “go-to” person in an administrative position would be an effective addition to the University’s efforts to strengthen and highlight the role of General Education

5. The metacognitive dialog with students: The need to explain to students the role of General Education in their baccalaureate program was very evident from the lunch-time conversations with students on February 7 and 8. While some students could eloquently account for the presence and importance of liberal arts courses in their professional education, one had the impression that they had come to these conclusions on their own rather than by absorbing an institutional philosophy. Other student responses ranged from indifference to incomprehension to hostility (“a waste of my time and money”). When faculty and staff were questioned about how students came to understand and appreciate the role of General Education at Philadelphia University, they usually pointed to the academic advising sessions connected with freshman orientation, but the localization of such an important dialog to a finite event at the beginning of the students’ academic careers is not an effective approach. The claims of the professional majors on the hearts and minds of the students are almost in the category of self-evident ideas, but the reasons for and advantages of liberal study at a professional university require more deliberate effort, and, once again, point up the need for someone to serve as advocate for General Education, as well as for formal, ongoing efforts to bring students into this metacognitive dialog. It is obvious that the most convincing resource for making the case for General Education would be the professional faculty themselves.

6. The need for a student voice: A dialog, of course, cannot be one-way, and in addition to explaining to students the need for and advantages of General Education, it is important to find ways to hear and respond to student concerns. Among these concerns were the rigidity of their curriculum programs, the lack of electives, the lack of choices in College Studies courses, and the lack of response to trends in student evaluations. (On this last point, students at one luncheon meeting cited the example of what they considered an egregiously bad College Studies course which they felt the administration was not doing anything about and which their lack of choices in College Studies frequently forced them to take; as one student tersely observed, “I feel my choices are between bad and worse.”) Part of the effort to improve the level of dialog on campus would be to find ways to evaluate and respond to student concerns.

7. Information about campus events: While not strictly a dialog question, one student concern was about the flow of information regarding campus events. Students perceived that there is a wealth of very excellent programming on campus, but expressed their frustration that they found out about such events only when it was too late to plan to attend or altogether after the fact. If co-curricular programming is to be part of General Education, then informing the students of such learning opportunities is a worthwhile effort.

C. A Structural “Silo” Effect

The metaphor of the “silo” as a way to describe the Philadelphia University experience was specifically articulated by faculty, staff, and students. Endemic to most campuses, this effect is perhaps exacerbated by the highly specialized nature of professional study at Philadelphia University. This silo experience is perforce at cross purposes with the University’s efforts at integrative General Education. Some manifestations of the silo effect include:

1. A lack of collaboration between academic units: As noted above, collaborative efforts between majors and majors, colleges and colleges, and colleges and College Studies were perceived as rare and ad hoc, i.e., usually undertaken at the initiative of individual faculty members and with a perceived lack of administrative encouragement and support. Such instances of collaboration were fondly recalled and highly valued in the college meetings on February 8, but such memories evoked a sense of regret that these collaborations did not occur more regularly.
2. A lack of social interaction among faculty: Part of the silo effect is social, a perceived lack of opportunity to meet and converse with colleagues from other academic units. One faculty member complained of having “party friends,” colleagues whom he saw only on an annual basis at institution-wide faculty gatherings. Increased opportunities for social interaction would no doubt lead to enhanced possibilities for pedagogical collaborations.
3. Limited opportunities to pursue courses outside the major: Students noted the lack of opportunities to pursue electives outside their professional majors. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that the courses they would typically elect frequently come with a string of pre-requisites that effectively preclude enrollment. Some students reported that they felt actively discouraged by advisors from taking courses outside of their major.

4. A lack of institutional identification: Perhaps the most serious manifestation of the silo effect is a lack of institutional identification with Philadelphia University on the part of the students. So strong is the appeal of the professional major that a larger sense of institutional loyalty atrophies or simply never develops. This problem was specifically identified by personnel in Student Life, who, from their perspective outside of the academic programs, are uniquely situated to make such an observation. The silo emphasis on the major (at times to the exclusion of all other considerations) will necessarily affect negatively institutional efforts around General Education. Both students and staff could recount stories of students in professional courses being encouraged by their teachers to skip College Studies courses while working on special professional course projects.

D. Concerns about Quality

One of the challenges facing Philadelphia University in its efforts to enhance General Education is a perceived lack of quality in the College Studies program. While students generally expressed a high level of satisfaction with their professional majors, their reviews of College Studies tended to be mixed. While it is impossible and counter-productive to generalize about all College Studies courses (many were identified by students as both rigorous and engaging), some patterns of concern emerged:

1. Active vs. passive learning: The hands-on, experiential learning in the professional majors sets the standard for student expectations about pedagogy. By comparison, College Studies courses were perceived by students as “passive,” by which they meant classroom-based and text oriented. It may be worthwhile pursuing ways to make the College Studies courses more active and experiential or in some way more engaging.
2. A perceived lack of rigor: While the courses in the professional majors are generally perceived as rigorous (in particular, the “crits” are seen as highly demanding and very valuable), some of the College Studies courses were perceived as less so. The question of grade inflation was brought up, and one student cited the example of a writing course in which everyone received an “A”. While such cases are no doubt anomalous, they have a way of entering into the popular imagination and tarnishing the entire program.
3. The high number of adjuncts: A faculty, not a student concern about College Studies is the high number of courses delivered by adjuncts. While adjuncts in major courses can often be

an asset, especially when they are practicing professionals, adjuncts in liberal arts courses can be more problematical, especially when the institution is trying to deliver a consistent, high quality General Education program. The mentoring program for adjuncts developed in C-ABE could perhaps be used as an institutional model for addressing this concern.

Summary of Challenges

Many of the challenges facing Philadelphia University in its review of General Education are not unique to the institution, and, where more difficult than elsewhere, are a function of the University's mission to deliver highly specialized professional education across a wide spectrum of majors. Happily, many of the challenges enumerated above – a lack of understanding of the theoretical bases of General Education, a failure to recognize the university-wide responsibility for delivering General Education, a lack of dialog, the silo effect – can be addressed through a thoughtful and inclusive process of reviewing and revising the General Education curriculum. Such a process will perforce require a re-examination of the institution's curriculum philosophy documents, will foster greater ongoing dialog, and will work to break down the silo effect. The overall goal of the process is, of course, to improve the quality of the student learning experience. Thus in each case a challenge can be turned into an advantage.

III Recommendations for future curricular development

One aspect of an external review for a campus is the desire to have the work of the campus placed within the context of the larger, national trends occurring in higher education. In that context four national current trends have implications and resonance for Philadelphia University: 1) the development of a framework for describing what the attainment of a degree in the United States means, 2) the importance of a broad set of learning outcomes for all students, 3) the emergence of a set of high impact practices that research is showing are related to higher levels of learning, especially for the students who come to us least well prepared, and 4) the recognition that assessment of student learning is a powerful tool for not only reporting the accomplishments of our institutions and students, but for helping faculty, staff and students improve teaching and learning.

1. The Degree Qualifications Profile – a national framework for the degree

In most of the rest of the world, national learning outcomes are articulated for all degrees awarded by higher education institutions as well as the level of demonstrated learning expected of degree recipients. In the United States the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) was developed in 2011 to explore whether a similar approach would make sense for U.S. students and campuses. Since all students receive a degree (an associate's or baccalaureate degree at the undergraduate level) regardless of the specific program of study, it makes sense to expect a similar level of demonstrated learning on a shared set of outcomes for any student to achieve a certain degree. The DQP describes five areas of learning and examples of how students could demonstrate an adequate level of attainment in each learning area expected for a recipient of the degree being sought.

[http://www.luminafoundation.org/publications/The_Degree_Qualifications_Profile.pdf] Given the Philadelphia University's commitment to providing a liberal education for all of its students, the DQP is particularly appealing as an organizing framework that directly complements Philadelphia's goals and strategic direction for creating a common experience for its students regardless of major.

2. Learning Outcomes for All Students

Philadelphia University has a set of six institutional learning outcomes applicable to all students regardless of a student's college or major area of study. In addition, College Studies has a set of eight learning outcomes for students completing the core curriculum in CS – these outcomes also apply to all students at Philadelphia University. Virtually all of the institutional learning outcomes are also found in the CS outcomes and vice versa. Further, students must meet learning outcomes in their college and/or program of study. In essence, students have three sets of learning outcomes that guide their Philadelphia University educational career – nowhere did we find any documentation that one set of outcomes is privileged over another.

Faculty and employers are unanimous in agreeing that undergraduates need a broad set of essential learning outcomes in order to be successful as employees and global citizens. The consensus on the list of learning outcomes is highly congruent with Philadelphia's institutional and College Studies outcomes. ["Raising the Bar: Employers' Views on College Learning in the Wake of the Economic Downturn" (*AAC&U and Hart Research Associates, 2010*)] The Center on education and the Workforce at Georgetown University further reports a strong relationship between the essential learning outcomes of Philadelphia University and increased earnings regardless of the specific major or area of study. Indeed, employers increasingly argue that they can and are willing to teach new hires much of the basic information they need for the company operations, but that they cannot equip students with communication skills, critical thinking, working in groups, ethics, personal and social responsibility, or civic and intercultural understanding and abilities – they look to higher education to ensure that students come prepared in these critical areas.

Therefore, aligning the program, CS, and institutional learning outcomes into a single matrix that easily represents the complementarity of the outcomes will facilitate communication and understanding for faculty and students. [Brandman University in California, which also has many professional programs, has recently mapped their institutional and programmatic learning outcomes and the DQP outcomes to demonstrate the common focus for the institution for all students.] Philadelphia University is well positioned to focus the campus on the centrality of student learning and to assess the attainment of the expected learning for all students across the curriculum and co-curriculum.

3. High Impact Practices

High impact practices were brought into national prominence through the work of George Kuh at Indiana University. These practices include internships, undergraduate research, global and diversity study, learning communities, first year experiences and seminars, common intellectual experiences, writing intensive courses, collaborative assignments, capstone courses and experiences, and community-based learning. To be effective these practices need to be emerge from intentional assignments that build on earlier work and scaffold the learning skills and abilities throughout the student's educational pathway. Since Philadelphia University has so many degree programs that are focused on preparing practicing professionals, the major programs of study frequently have many opportunities integrated into the curriculum. CS also has many places throughout its program where students have multiple, engaged high impact learning spaces. Students were unanimous in expressing the desire for high impact learning experiences and the power they have for their learning, as well as the desire for a clear and consistent explanation of how the experiences relate to the learning outcomes and the complete curricular and co-curricular experience.

The emergent national research also points to the power of thoughtfully organizing and scaffolding high impact practices on the learning of students who come to our campuses least well prepared prior to their arrival. Kuh has referred to these gains in learning for many under-served students as compensatory, i.e. the less well prepared students make even larger gains in learning than their better prepared students when engaged in meaningful, integrated, and articulated ways throughout their education. Philadelphia has a very strong foundation and tradition of providing high impact opportunities for its students, especially in several of the majors; what appears to be less well developed is the integration of these experiences with both the learning outcomes and with CS and the co-curriculum components of the university. Injecting more high impact practices into CS throughout the curriculum would provide a strong complement to students' experiences in their major and in co-curricular activities. There is a need for explicit and consistent articulation of this intentionality and purpose across the university from faculty and staff.

4. Assessment as a High Impact Practice for Teaching and Learning

The explicit infusion of general education learning outcomes across the campus as contained in the program review materials and the discussion to establish Philadelphia as unique among

peer institutions as a provider of excellent professional preparation coupled with an excellent liberal education, is a truly path breaking goal. It is through the integration of general education outcomes across CS and the majors that Philadelphia will be able to achieve this meritorious objective for the university.

Already the groundwork has been laid through the first three items discussed above – a focus on the degrees the university awards students rather than only the specific majors, the establishment and alignment of learning outcomes, the infusion of high impact practices. Now it is necessary to incorporate an assessment strategy that will document the achievement of the university's mission.

The focus of most curricula in higher education at the undergraduate level has been heavily weighted with mastery of content, i.e. lower order skills and abilities. If we step back and recognize that one week of the New York Times contains more information than a person was likely to encounter in a lifetime in the 18th century, and that it is estimated that four exabytes (4.0×10^{19}) of unique information will be generated this year – more than was generated in the previous 5,000 years, it strongly invites us to refocus our educational efforts around equipping our student with skills to access, process and evaluate new information in addition to learning base content.

The good news is that we have the tools to accomplish this essential outcome. One of the more promising approaches and one that over half of U.S. colleges and universities report using is e-portfolios to capture, demonstrate and assess student learning across multiple learning outcomes, multiple courses, multiple programs of study, the co-curriculum, and beyond the confines of the formal campus. The development of rubrics that are reliable and valid, reflecting shared criteria for learning have provided faculty and others with the means of viewing student learning in an integrated context of outcomes and goals that allow for course-based assignments to be utilized as evidence of student learning of institutional or programmatic outcomes. Portfolios allow students to develop their own abilities to assess their learning strengths, weaknesses, and growth over time – a skill they will definitely need once they leave our universities and that employers highly value.

As the framing documents for the program review clearly state, it is not about the number of credit hours that are allocated to a specific program or major, but rather the student learning of

essential outcomes that is critical to the award of a degree. The national, international, and employment/labor information daily is consistent in indicating that the transferable/generic/general education skills and abilities are equally important as specific content knowledge, i.e. both are important; one is not privileged over the other.

Concluding Comment

Philadelphia University is well positioned to offer itself as a national leader in showcasing how higher education can actually provide students with the education necessary for success in the twenty-first century. As noted previously, there are issues and challenges that affect the University's ability to achieve its goal, but there is also strong support in many sectors of the University already working to achieve the goal. We commend the courage and foresight the University has exhibited in undertaking this path. Philadelphia has the foundation of applied professional programs directly linked to the community, an intentional CS program for all degree seekers, engaged and supportive academic and student life offices and staff, a set of institutional, general education and program learning outcomes that map together well, and both administrative and faculty support for achieving a shared goal of distinguishing the University as a leader in providing the new reality educational experience that is necessary to meet the demands of the globally interdependent world its graduates will inhabit.